

New boss picked for Fox Theatre

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After nearly 25 years, the Fox Theatre, Atlanta's most beloved performance venue, is getting a new boss, with old ties to the historic chain of movie palaces.

Allan C. Vella, general manager of Ford Park in Beaumont, Texas, will take over running the Peachtree Street venue July 1, succeeding longtime Fox chief Ed Neiss, 66, who is retiring. Neiss, who started his career at the Fox on Oct. 26, 1981 — the Rolling Stones played that night — will serve as a consultant to Atlanta Landmarks Inc., the theater's owner, for two years.

In a previous career stop, Vella, 42, managed the Fox Theatre in Detroit for four years. Like Atlanta's Fox, that venue specializes in big-event theater and music performances.



Allan C. Vella, who becomes the Fox's chief July 1, once headed Detroit's Fox Theatre.

"I told the board [of Atlanta Landmarks] that if this was any run-of-the-mill venue, I wouldn't be leaving my present job," Vella said. "But the Fox is always something special. These buildings are more than bricks and mortar. They have a heart and soul."

Vella's current venue is a 227-acre facility that includes a 16,000-seat amphitheater and an 8,000-seat arena. He is employed by SMG, which manages 195 facilities worldwide.

Atlanta Landmarks board President Alan Thomas said, "Though we are sad to lose Ed Neiss, who is something of an icon in Atlanta and the industry ... we fully expect that Allan will quickly acclimate and become an integral part of the Atlanta community."

Neiss, who keeps the Fox booked 300 nights a year, said Vella's experience at the Detroit Fox probably helped him land the job.

"It is similar to us not only in historical value, but also from a programming perspective," Neiss said. "That experience probably gave him a leg up on other candidates. They liked his personality and they felt he had deep and abiding respect for the facility and its current management."

Vella is married and has three children.

"Atlanta is a beautiful city with a lot to offer culturally," he said. "I'm glad to be back in a major market."